

Writing Progression Nursery

		Overall Writing Focus	Key Developments	What might children's writing look like?	Expectations for the Children	Support for Children
Nursery	Autumn 1	Early Mark Making	Begins to use gross motor movements to make marks. Develops shoulder and core stability. Explores a range of materials to create lines and shapes. Talks about what they have drawn and created	- Large-scale circular or vertical marks made with whole arm movements (e.g. paint rollers, chalks, water). - Scribbles and random lines made with intent.	- Begins to enjoy making marks and showing them to others. - Talks about what they've drawn, even if adults can't yet see it.	- Provide large surfaces (easel paper, playground floor, walls) for mark making. Use thick tools (paintbrushes, rollers, chalks). - Model joy and purpose in making marks — writing shopping lists, drawing maps, etc. - Encourage shoulder and elbow strength through climbing, sweeping, and ribbon play.
	Autumn 2	Controlled Mark Making	Begins to vary pressure and control in drawing lines and shapes. Discussing what they have drawn- giving meaning to marks	- More controlled lines; begins to draw enclosed shapes (circles, crosses). - Marks begin to appear in rows or clusters.	- Can hold a pencil, crayon, or marker more effectively and shows greater control. - Begins to draw people or objects with recognisable features (e.g., a head with legs).	- Provide smaller mark-making tools (chunky pencils, short crayons). - Offer vertical and horizontal surfaces. - Play dough, threading, and tweezers to strengthen fingers. - Model drawing and writing with clear, deliberate marks.

	S p r i n g 1	Ascribing Meaning to Marks	Begins to understand that print carries meaning. Starts to link talk and mark making — “That says mummy.” Refines grip from palmar to tripod grasp.	• Marks may accompany verbal explanations. • Attempts at writing “messages” in play (e.g., writing a note in role play).	• Begins to describe what their marks mean. • Shows awareness that writing can communicate.	• Model meaningful writing in everyday contexts (lists, signs, names). • Provide opportunities in all areas — clipboards in outdoor play, recipe cards in role play. • Respond to children’s marks by valuing their explanations rather than correcting form.
	S p r i n g 2	Symbols and Letters	Notices letter shapes in their environment. Begins to experiment with letter-like forms Understands directionality (left-to-right). Building on tripod grasp	• Random letters, shapes, or lines that represent writing. May use letters from their name within mark making.	• Begins to include some known letters or symbols within their writing attempts. • Shows interest in recognising and copying letters.	• Provide name cards, alphabet friezes, and environmental print. • Encourage tracing, stamping, and copying letters in meaningful ways (labels, name cards) • Model letter formation using sound–letter links in play (e.g., “You’ve written ‘m’ for mummy!”).
	S u m m e r 1	Emergent Name Writing	Begins to identify own name in print and attempts to reproduce it. Understands that writing follows a sequence of letters and sounds.	• Strings of marks and random letters that may resemble their name. May use capital letters or write from right to left.	• Can attempt to write own name with increasing accuracy. Recognises that names have meaning and can identify their own.	• Support with daily name recognition (self-registration, labelling work). • Provide tracing and free-writing opportunities using name cards. • Celebrate attempts at name writing and link to phonics (“Your name starts with ‘s’ — listen for that sound”).



	S u m m e r 2	Early Composition & Purposeful Writing	Begins to use marks to express ideas or retell experiences. Shows awareness that writing has different purposes.	Combines drawings and symbols to represent stories. Writes letters or strings of symbols to label or caption.	Can talk about what they have written and link it to an idea or story. Begins to use writing in purposeful play (lists, menus, signs).	- Provide role-play writing materials linked to themes (menus, tickets, cards). - Celebrate writing as part of storytelling. - Continue to model adult writing with clear links between talk, sound, and mark making. - Offer opportunities for children to share and display their writing.
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Opportunities for Mark Making in Continuous Provision

Autumn – Early Mark Making <i>(Focus: large-scale, physical mark making; developing control, joy, and purpose)</i>				
<u>Outdoors / Large-Scale Play</u> <u>Chalk trails and puddle paint:</u> children use chunky chalks or wet brushes to draw on playgrounds and fences. <u>Muddy messages:</u> use sticks to draw or 'write' in mud, sand, or wet soil. <u>Water graffiti:</u> large paintbrushes and buckets of water for painting	<u>Creative Area</u> <u>Finger painting and foam marks:</u> opportunities to swirl, drag, and flick. <u>Leaf printing and pattern trails:</u> draw lines through paint or sand to "connect" prints together. <u>Autumn cards:</u> blank cards and envelopes for children to "send" pictures or messages to friends or family.	<u>Role Play / Small World</u> <u>Shop play:</u> blank paper and stubby crayons to "draw" or "mark prices" on items. <u>Home corner:</u> notepads and envelopes for pretend lists or letters ("I'm writing to Grandma!"). <u>Building site:</u> clipboards and large pencils for "plans" or "maps."	<u>Sand / Water / Malleable</u> <u>Sand patterns:</u> rakes, combs, and sticks for large sweeping marks. <u>Dough marks:</u> use tools or fingers to "draw" on dough with lines, swirls, and shapes.	<u>Book & Mark-Making Areas</u> <u>Message station:</u> envelopes, stamps, chunky crayons, name cards. <u>Loose parts mark making:</u> use natural materials (conkers, sticks, acorns) to "trace" letter-like shapes in trays of flour, sand, or lentils.



lines, circles, or “messages” on walls and fences. <u>Ribbon wands and sweeping:</u> sweeping leaves or painting with long-handled brushes builds shoulder strength and early writing flow.				
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Spring – Controlled Mark Making <i>(Focus: developing fine motor strength, control, and early pencil grip)</i>				
<u>Fine Motor</u> <u>Mini whiteboards and clipboards:</u> always available for children to draw or “record.” <u>Collections:</u> children draw flowers, leaves, or other materials from the nature table. <u>Post office play:</u> small notepads and envelopes for “delivering” marks or names.	<u>Creative Area</u> <u>Stencils and shape drawing:</u> simple outlines (circles, crosses) for tracing or decorating. <u>Mini card-making station:</u> blank folded cards, stamps, stickers, short crayons. <u>Autumn display contribution:</u> children “sign” or mark their own work with pride.	<u>Construction & Small World</u> <u>Plan and build:</u> clipboards for “designing” towers or “marking” how tall their buildings are. <u>Farm or transport play:</u> children draw tracks, maps, or signs for vehicles.	<u>Outdoor / Large Scale</u> <u>Spring sketching:</u> chunky pencils and paper outdoors to draw the trees changing. <u>Leaf rubbings:</u> rubbing crayons over leaves taped under paper. <u>Fence mark-making panels:</u> mounted clear Perspex or cardboard panels for drawing big controlled lines and shapes.	<u>Everyday Writing Invitations</u> Mini “to-do lists,” “delivery notes,” and “menus” dotted around provision. Message box for peers to post drawings or early marks to one another. Name-marking opportunities (self-registration stones, coat pegs, snack lists).

Summer – Early Composition and Emergent Name Writing <i>(Focus: developing name awareness and beginning to form recognisable letters)</i>				
<u>Role Play/ Small World</u> <u>Café or shop play:</u> clipboards, order pads, and mini menus — children “take orders” or “write prices.” <u>Post office:</u> stamps, envelopes, baskets for posting messages. <u>Vet or doctor play:</u> simple forms, appointment cards, and note pads.	<u>Creative Area</u> <u>Story drawing:</u> invite children to “tell you what’s happening” in their picture — scribe their words to show that marks = meaning. <u>Label my creation:</u> baskets of tags and sticky notes so children can “sign” or label what they make.	<u>Malleable / Fine Motor</u> <u>Salt-tray letters:</u> free exploration — children trace familiar letters with fingers or sticks. <u>Name pebbles:</u> children match, stamp, or copy first letters of their name. <u>Pegboards & threading:</u> continuing fine-motor control for later writing fluency.	<u>Outdoor / Large Scale</u> <u>Environmental print hunt:</u> clipboards and mark-making tools for children to “record” letters they spot. <u>Fence chalkboards:</u> encourage tracing over large letter outlines or adding their own “writing.” <u>Delivery station:</u> trikes and baskets with parcels tagged with marks or letter strings. <u>Pavement chalk area:</u> draw large letters of their names in colourful chalks.	<u>Everyday Writing Invitations</u> Self-registration with movable name cards. “Sign in” for snack or garden time. “Write” in response to story props (e.g., make a ticket to ride the bear train, label a potion bottle). <u>Self-registration area:</u> children write or trace their name on pebbles, cards, or magnets to “check in.” <u>Art signing station:</u> small name cards available so children can “sign” their creations independently.



			<u>Mini spray bottles:</u> for squeezing and strengthening fingers outdoors.	<u>Display signatures:</u> invite children to write their name tags for their work on walls or gallery boards.
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